

ARNOLD ARBORETUM  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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FLORICULTURE

BULLETIN  
OF POPULAR INFORMATION

SERIES 4      VOLUME VI  
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FLORICULTURE

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NATIONAL FLOWERS

FROM time to time we hear of the "national" flowers of various European countries, but it is surprising to find that there are none of these "national" flowers officially accepted by the national governments. There have been various methods used for selecting "national" flowers, so that hoped for official recognition would lend considerable weight to such selections, but unfortunately this is lacking in most cases. Consequently we must rely on various polls and other selective methods for information, and there are many interesting stories connected with certain flowers which have been popularly chosen.

For instance, the rose has been greatly admired by the people of England since the reign of Edward IV (1461-1483) when it made its first appearance upon the great seal of England. Shakespeare told of a quarrel in the old temple garden between the Duke of York and the Earl of Somerset. Finding that their followers were becoming very excited, the Duke suggested that they "shall in dumb significance" proclaim their thoughts, adding:

"Let him who is a true born gentlemen,  
And stands upon the honor of his birth,  
If he supposes I have pleaded truth,  
From off this briar pluck a white rose with me."

To which the Earl replied:

"Let him who is no coward nor no flatterer,  
But dares maintain the party of the truth,  
Pluck a red rose flower from this briar with me."

This quarrel lasted thirty years and is referred to now as the War of the Roses. At the end of this thirty-year period a Princess of York



married a Prince of Lancaster, and so the roses were united. One of the roses used in gardens today was named to commemorate this great occasion. It is called the Rose of York and Lancaster, for its flowers are partly red and partly white. Legend has it that this rose originated at the end of the bloody War of the Roses.

Mention is often made of the cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*) as the national flower of Germany. In German history it is associated with the beautiful Louise of Prussia, who was the mother of William, the first Emperor of Germany (1871-1888). It is said that during the battle of Jena and Auerstadt, Queen Louise was forced to make her escape from Berlin with her two sons, the older of whom was about nine years old. On the way to Königsberg their carriage broke down, and they were obliged to alight and wait by the roadside until the damage was repaired. The Queen mother put her arms about each small boy and endeavored to divert them by calling their attention to the great number of beautiful "Kornblumen" that were growing nearby. "Go," she said, "and gather some of these flowers, and I shall make a wreath and crown you king." Forgetting their troubles, the little fellows ran off and soon picked many blossoms. The Queen then made a wreath from the flowers and placed it on the head of her oldest son. Little William, not to be outdone by his older brother, begged his mother to make one for him, which she did. In placing this wreath on her son's head, she said, "Crowns mean very little sometimes." Before the close of the century that little boy was crowned Emperor of United Germany. Needless to say, he always loved the "Kornblumen," because they reminded him of that pleasant time with his mother when he was a child.

The Fleur de Lis (Fleur de Louis), the white iris, was historically the national flower of France since the time of Philippe le Bel, and King Saint Louis (1214-1270) wanted it to be the emblem of purity. But the flower was the emblem of monarchy for it had appeared on the crest of the royal family, and so could not be used by the Republic.

Although the Italian legislative assembly has never chosen a flower to represent their country, the people have selected the marguerite (*Chrysanthemum frutescens*), because it bears the name of the first Queen of Italy, Margherita di Savoia.

In Norway the "Roslyng" (*Calluna vulgaris*) has been generally considered the national flower. It is not only of value for its lovely summer blossoms, but it is able to withstand the very poor soil conditions and at the same time be perfectly hardy.

The flower most dear to Swedish hearts is *Linnaea borealis*, for it is

named in honor of the world famous Swedish botanist, Linnaeus. Another flower which is very popular in that country is *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum* (in Swedish "prastkrage"), and the Swedish people use it a great deal in their home decorations. This is the oxeye daisy, a native of Europe, which has become a weed in certain parts of the eastern United States. The bright yellow centers of these daisies make them excellent for use in combination with blue flowers on patriotic occasions, for blue and yellow are the Swedish national colors.

In Denmark the clover is considered the most characteristic flower, and the beech tree (*Fagus sylvatica*) the most frequently mentioned in Danish poetry.

The common rue (*Ruta graveolens*), a symbol of virginity and purity, has often been considered the Lithuanian national flower. The Lithuanian vestal virgins who guarded "the eternal sacred fire" always wore wreaths of rue upon their heads.

The tulip is generally accepted as being the most representative of the Netherlands, since it is highly probable that proportionately more tulips are grown in the Netherlands than in any other country in the world.

The shamrock is considered the world over as the popular representative of Ireland. The interest in *Trifolium repens* (or *T. minus*) centers around the early days of the mission of the great Saint Patrick (about 432). One day he was preaching in the neighborhood of the County of Meath in an attempt to explain the doctrine of Trinity to a group who found it most difficult to understand. "How," asked one of the chiefs, "can there be three in one."

Saint Patrick stooped and picked from the sod at his feet a clover leaf. Holding it before them, he said, "Behold, in this trifoliate leaf how three persons in the God-head can exist and yet be one." The generic name of the clover is *Trifolium*, meaning one leaf in three parts. The illustration was so forcible and yet so familiar that the Chief and his whole clan accepted the Christian faith. From this tradition, in all probability, came the adoption in later years of the shamrock as the national emblem of Ireland.

In Scotland the thistle has been traced to the reign of Alexander III and the battle of Largs. In the year 1263 there was a great battle between the Danes and the Scots. The northern invaders under King Haakon succeeded in landing unobserved on the coast of Scotland near the mouth of the Clyde, not far from where Alexander's army was encamped. Under the protection of the night the Danish soldiers crept stealthily toward the Scottish camp, hoping to conquer the Scots



by this surprise attack. Victory seem within their grasp when one of the barefooted Danish soldiers trod upon a thistle. His sharp cry of pain was sufficient to arouse the Scottish soldiers, who in turn fought with such bravery and skill that the Danish invaders were driven from the Scottish shore. Since that time the Scotch thistle, *Onopordum acanthium*, has been considered the national flower of Scotland.

The Welsh people wear the leek on the first day of March in commemoration of Saint David, the patron saint of Wales. White and green, the hues of the leek, are the Cambrian colors.

In Switzerland the edelweiss (*Leontopodium alpinum*) is considered of importance because its natural habitat is in the Alps. Greece claims the violet as its national flower, because it has been mentioned so often by Homer and other writers of the classics. It blooms abundantly in the Isles of the Mediterranean and is constantly seen in the Athenian flower markets. The sunflower, one of the many species of *Helianthus*, is the national flower of Russia, not only because it grows so well but because it is also of great economic importance.

As far as the United States is concerned, a pamphlet was published several years ago by Louis Prang of Boston in which he set forth the respective merits of goldenrod (*Solidago*) and arbutus (*Epigaea repens*) as competitors for the place of honor. He asked for an expression of opinion from the public at that time, and the response was overwhelmingly in favor of the goldenrod. Personally, the writer feels that the goldenrod is very well suited for a national flower not only because of its wide distribution in this country, but also by reason of its scientific name —*Solidago*— which means to make whole or to join. The name alone almost qualifies it as an emblem of our great republic.

Richard J. Hayden

Superintendent of Parks & Cemeteries  
Boston, Massachusetts

**Note:** Mr. Richard J. Hayden, Superintendent of the Boston Parks, has been interested in this subject of national flowers for many years. At one time he contemplated making a garden in which would be represented the national flowers of each country. In order to get official information he wrote to many of the European Consuls and also to several of the European governments for definite information and was very much surprised to find that no government had passed legislation recognizing one as their national flower. The notes contained in this Bulletin are the result of Mr. Hayden's correspondence and are published here for the interest of the gardening public.



# OFFICIAL STATE FLOWERS

List compiled by the Wild Flower Preservation Society  
Washington, D. C.

Alabama	Goldenrod	<i>Solidago</i> sp.	Legis.	1917
Arizona	Giant Cactus	<i>Cereus giganteus</i>	Legis.	1933
Arkansas	Apple Blossom	<i>Malus</i> sp.	Legis.	1901
California	California Poppy	<i>Eschscholtzia californica</i>	Legis.	1903
Colorado	Colorado Columbine	<i>Aquilegia caerulea</i>	Legis.	1899
Connecticut	Mountain-laurel	<i>Kalmia latifolia</i>	Legis.	1907
Delaware	Peach Blossom	<i>Prunus Persica</i>	Legis.	1895
Florida	Orange Blossom	<i>Citrus sinensis</i>	Legis.	1909
Georgia	Cherokee Rose	<i>Rose laevigata</i>	Legis.	1916
Idaho	Lewis Mockorange	<i>Philadelphus Lewisii</i>	Legis.	1931
Illinois	Native Wood Violet	<i>Viola</i> sp.	Legis.	1908
Indiana	Zinnia	<i>Zinnia elegans</i>	Legis.	1931
Iowa	Wild Rose	<i>Rosa pratincola</i>	Legis.	1897
Kansas	Sunflower	<i>Helianthus annuus</i>	Legis.	1903
Kentucky	Goldenrod	<i>Solidago</i> sp.	Legis.	1926
Louisiana	Southern Magnolia	<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	Legis.	1900
Maine	Pine cone & tassel	<i>Pinus Strobus</i>	Legis.	1895
Maryland	Black-eyed Susan	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Legis.	1918
Massachusetts	Trailing Arbutus	<i>Epigaea repens</i>	Legis.	1925
Michigan	Apple Blossom	<i>Malus</i> sp.	Legis.	1897
Minnesota	Showy Ladyslipper	<i>Cypripedium spectabile</i>	Legis.	1902
Mississippi	Southern Magnolia	<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	Schools	—
Missouri	Downy Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus mollis</i>	Legis.	1923
Montana	Bitterroot	<i>Lewisia rediviva</i>	Legis.	1895
Nebraska	November Goldenrod	<i>Solidago serotina</i>	Legis.	1895
Nevada	Sagebush	<i>Artemisia tridentata</i>	Common consent	
New Hampshire	Purple Lilac	<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>	Legis.	1918
New Jersey	Violet	<i>Viola</i> sp.	Legis.	1913
New Mexico	Yucca	<i>Yucca</i> sp.	Schools	—
New York	Rose	<i>Rosa</i> sp.	Schools	1891
North Carolina	Oxeye Daisy	<i>Chrysanthemum leucanthemum</i>	Common consent	
North Dakota	Prairie Rose	<i>Rosa arkansana</i>	Legis.	1907
Ohio	Scarlet Carnation	<i>Dianthus Caryophyllus</i>	Legis.	1904
Oklahoma	Mistletoe	<i>Phoradendron flavescens</i>	Legis.	1893
Oregon	Oregon Hollygrape	<i>Mahonia Aquifolium</i>	Legis.	1899
Pennsylvania	Mountain-laurel	<i>Kalmia latifolia</i>	Legis.	1933
Rhode Island	Violet	<i>Viola</i> sp.	Schools	1897
South Carolina	Carolina Jessamine	<i>Gelsemium sempervirens</i>	Legis.	1924
South Dakota	American Pasqueflower	<i>Pulsatilla hirsutissima</i>	Legis.	1919
Tennessee	Iris	<i>Iris</i> sp.	Legis.	1933
Texas	Texas Bluebonnet	<i>Lupinus subcarnosus</i>	Legis.	1901
Utah	Sego-lily	<i>Calochortus Nuttallii</i>	Legis.	1911
Vermont	Red Clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Legis.	1894
Virginia	Flowering Dogwood	<i>Cornus florida</i>	Legis.	1918
Washington	Coast Rhododendron	<i>Rhododendron macrophyllum</i>	Legis.	1893
West Virginia	Great Rhododendron	<i>Rhododendron maximum</i>	Legis.	1903
Wisconsin	Native Violet	<i>Viola</i> sp.	Schools	1909
Wyoming	Indian Paintbrush	<i>Castilleja coccinea</i>	Legis.	1917
Hawaii	Hibiscus	<i>Hibiscus Rosa-sinensis</i>	Legis.	1923
Alaska	Forget-me-not	<i>Myosotis</i> sp.	Legis.	1917

**Notes:** - As this goes to press, there are many plants in the Arboretum which are already showing signs of active growth. During the last of March there were many unusually warm days which started early growth in several types of plants. The warm spell was immediately followed by cold rainy days that, fortunately, held things back a bit. The leaf buds of many honeysuckles, barberries, and currants are as far advanced as are those of *Prinsepia sinensis*, which ordinarily is the first of all to start growth in the spring. Some of the willows as seen from the Administration Building are yellowish or reddish-green, sure signs that warm weather must soon come to stay. *Magnolia stellata* is not yet in bloom, and though many of the flower buds have started to split open, they are still sufficiently tight to withstand any cold weather during the next few days. *Rhododendron mucronulatum* is just starting to bloom, while *Viburnum fragrans* has been out for several days, its flower buds being uninjured by the mild winter. *Corylopsis*, *Forsythia*, and *Benzoin* are just ready to open, while *Erica carnea*, protected by a mulch of straw all winter is now in full bloom. *Daphne Mezereum*, *Acer rubrum*, and *Acer dasycarpum* have been in bloom for several days. It is safe to say that there has been practically no winter injury to the trees and shrubs in the Arboretum this winter. If the unusually warm weather of the past week continues, there may be danger from late frosts, but otherwise most of the plants in the Arboretum came through last winter in splendid condition.

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